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ABSTRACT

This paper, an offshoot of a larger study, looks at doctoral dissertations on women in education administration completed and abstracted from January 1973 through January 1979 and categorized as coming from a feminist perspective. Two domains are examined--problem selection and research methods. Within the domain of problem selection, six general subject areas were identified: women's status, women in educational administration, attitudes of and toward women, barriers to women, leadership styles and effectiveness, and the structure of organizations. In these studies, use of the male model of research is the norm, sexism is perpetuated, and women are investigated not as populations but as topics. The dissertations' research methodologies are equally male-oriented, according to the author. To correct the male-orientation of research, a new paradigm is proposed. This paradigm would expand the use of the naturalistic method of inquiry; emphasize the generation of hypotheses; grow out of the personal experiences, feelings, and needs of the researcher; place the authority for truth in the subject; rely on the oral tradition; and use research as an instrument of social change. The implications of this paradigm in the two domains of research are explored. (Author/IRT)

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A Feminist Critique of Feminist Research in Educational Administration

by

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Paper Presented at the
Annual Meeting
of the
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> I cannot stress how important for the future of education...and the future of human experience it is for us to take the development and explication of a feminine perspective in educational research seriously and devote all our talents and energies collectively to its accomplishment.
>
> Jane Anton (Note 1.)

By 1981, it has become clear that women are being researched. Within a number of disciplines, the study of women has been opened for reconsideration and revision, with the result an outpouring of books and articles based upon research on women. Once ignored by the researcher, women are now the subject of numerous research studies, and hence, women's issues have become one of the fastest growing areas of research in the social sciences (Daniels, 1975). Where once such projects would have been considered unscholarly or harmful to the researcher's career, women's issues have now become respectable. "Far from being a mere 'flash in the scholar's pan,' the quantity and quality indicate that research on women will continue to flourish" (Moore and Wollitzer, 1979, p. 2).

As research on women has intensified, researchers have become increasingly concerned about how appropriate the existing research methodologies are for the study of women. In one of the earliest critiques, Carlson (1972) argued that current research paradigms, which she characterized as involving manipulation, quantification and control, not only impose restraints on the understanding of female psychology, but also lead to a general impoverishment in the capacity to say anything meaningful about human personality.

Lloyd (1978) documented the impact of societal norms on the definition of sex differences in psychology, sociology, and anthropology. She emphasized a number of methodological issues: the survival of spurious facts through repeated publication, the failure to report sex differences, and the consequences of employing the traditional null-hypothesis strategy. Anton (Note 1.) echoed

the inappropriateness of the null hypothesis for the study of sex differences:

> In the null hypothesis, we assume things are the same and are surprised if they turn out to be different. In research on sex differences, we should be surprised if they turn out to be the same. We should talk about not one normal distribution, but two; and develop quantitative methods for comparing, contrasting, finding, and proving similarity rather than proving differences.

Additional analyses (Sherif in psychology, 1979; Smith in sociology, 1979; Parsons in philosophy, 1979; and Elshtain, 1979, and Sapiro, 1979, in political science) have identified androcentric bias in both method and problem in social science research.

Thus, within a number of disciplines, researchers are searching for a feminist perspective from which to undertake research on women. The present study extends this inquiry into the field of educational administration.

The field of educational administration has followed the lead of the other social science disciplines in generating research on women. The bulk of this research has concentrated on treating women as a separate group for perhaps the first time.

This paper, an offshoot of a larger study which analyzed research on women in educational administration done during the 1970s, looks particularly at those studies on women administrators undertaken from a feminist perspective, in an effort to critique what I believe is the cutting edge research on women leaders in educational organizations.

The major unit of analysis for this discussion is doctoral dissertations on women in educational administration completed and abstracted from January 1973, through January 1979, and categorized as coming from a feminist perspective. Feminist perspective was operationally defined as being research done by researchers who state they are feminists, who list on their vitae membership in women's rights organizations, who use non-sexist language, or who, in their dedications or acknowledgements, make pro-feminist statements. Sixty such dissertations

were so identified. Feminist research is being critiqued, in particular here, because it is the belief of this author that the most useful and productive study of women, and perhaps society as a whole, will come from the feminist perspective. Additionally, analysis of both feminist and non-feminist research on women in educational administration (Shakeshaft, 1981) found that feminists tend to be more likely to be associated with higher quality studies, based on analysis with a 100-point scale modeled after criteria outlined by Borg and Gall (1979). Specifically, it was found that the feminist standing of the researcher is significant beyond the .0001 probability level. Furthermore, the practical significance of the relationship is moderately higher since it accounts for over 22% of the variance. In research on women in educational administration then, the feminist tends to be the better researcher. Thus, this dissertation literature being discussed today is representative of the best of the genre.

In critiquing this literature, I'd like to concentrate on two domains: problem selection and methods and then move to a paradigm for future research.

Problem Selection

The research direction of the dissertations may be classified into six general categories: status, profiles, attitudes, barriers, leadership styles/effectiveness, and structural determinents. These general topics, along with the specific subtopics, covered in the dissertation literature are discussed below.

Status These studies document the number of women in administrative positions in grades K-12 and higher education. In addition to recording the number of women employed, the types of positions in which these women are employed are also investigated. Also covered in this category are the number of women in graduate departments of educational administration and the number of women who are not yet administrators but who aspire to such positions.

Profiles The dissertations in this category cover K-12 and higher education and look at the personal histories of women in educational administration, including demographic, personality, and professional information. The career paths of the woman administrator, including her feelings of satisfaction with her job, are also profiled. Sex differences in characteristics of male and female administrators are also researched. Finally, the characteristics of specific women who have been successful in the field, as well as biographical portraits of particular women administrators, give an in-depth look at women in administration.

Attitudes Attitudes toward women administrators are the major focus of this category. However, the attitudes of women administrators are also measured as well as the attitudes of administrators, both female and male, toward the characteristics important if the women administrator is to be successful. Finally, the attitudes of both male and female administrators toward legislation, particularly Title IX, are investigated. K-12 and higher education are the settings in which these studies are done.

Barriers Research on barriers to women in administration may be broken into three categories: internal barriers, external barriers, and strategies for overcoming barriers. Each of these topics is explored in the dissertation research in both the settings of K-12 and higher education. Internal barriers include aspects of socialization, personality, aspiration level, individual beliefs and attitudes, motivation, and self image. External barriers which are researched are sex role stereotyping, sex discrimination, lack of professional preparation, and family responsibilities. Methods for overcoming these barriers include general advice, sponsorship, role models, legislation, and education.

Leadership Style/Effe eness These studies, which encompass K-12 and higher education settings as well as one research and development organization, cover the following subjects: performance as perceived by subordinates, performance as perceived by superordinates, performance as perceived by self,

leadership styles of female versus male administrators, and leadership styles identified as necessary for effective leadership.

Structural Determinants There are only two studies in which the structure of the organization is investigated. One, at the K-12 level, looks at the organizational climate and its relationship to leadership styles of males and females, and the other studies the place of women in the organizational structure of higher education institutions.

A major observation which cries for discussion is that these dissertations emerge from a framework which is primarily male-defined. Male defined research is that which presents men and the male model as the norm and women and the female model as a deviation from the norm. It is research which reconstructs reality by trying to fit the female experience into the male mold. The dissertations are of this variety, which is not unexpected. After all, the majority of those doing the research on this topic have been trained by men and are working with committees primarily composed of men. Additionally, educational administration as a discipline borrows heavily from the social sciences (Culbertson, et. al, 1973) as well as from organizational theory and research. Much of what is believed to be true and how such truth is pursued is taken from the substance and methodologies of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and management. These disciplines have traditionally focused on men, male institutions, and on phenomena and areas in which men dominate (Acker & Van Houten, 1974; Weisskopf, 1978). Given this history, it is surprising that questions related to women were asked at all.

A male way of looking at the world, for instance, might be to talk of sexual intercourse in terms of the penetration of the vagina by the penis. In fact, such a model is regularly used in legal and social documents. Another way to view this same act is to describe the penis as being enveloped or swallowed by the vagina. This latter view might be a female way of conceptualizing the same act.

It has been pointed out by many scholars (for instance, Bernard, 1979; Wilson Schaef, Note 2) that the female probably knows two worlds: the female world and the male world, since she partakes of both. However, the male is usually cognizant of only one world: his own. Thus, the female perhaps has a dual way of looking at reality. Bridging this duality with the study of organizations might result in nonparticipation by female organizational members see not as a non-problem or a norm, but as a political issue or a sign of alienation. The concept of unintentional power, held by males just by being male, is another issue which originates from a female perspective. Sex as a status characteristic (Lockheed & Hall, 1976) is another analysis of organizational activity from a female view which has implications for theories of administration. Thus, this female focus is crucial in an analysis of organizational behavior.

Unfortunately, the questions asked in most of the dissertation research still originate from a philosophy where the male model is the norm. For instance, the research on leadership and effectiveness originates from a paradigm that is male and which attempts to determine if women "measure up." The LBDQ is sexist in content and is seldom revised for a female population. Similarly, the work on aspiration level assumes that the desire to move from teaching into administration is somehow correct and that not to wish to make such a move is deviant behavior which must be corrected. The male model, whether it be in leadership style or aspiration level, pervades these dissertations. Again, this is not surprising. In education in general, the questions we have asked have made the statement that the norm is male and that women are deviants. We have asked, "Why can't Johnny read?" not "Why can't Janey add?" We have asked "Are women teachers and administrators feminizing our schools?" but we have not asked "Are male administrators and teachers polarizing our schools and causing them to become violent places?"

However, not only has the problem selection been inadequate in scope, it

has tended to reinforce sexism both in topic and method. Research which compares males and females reinforces the concept that differences, when they exist, are somehow important. As Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) have pointed out, the tendency among researchers and among editors who publish articles has been to stress sex differences rather than similarities. Thus, we tend not to read those studies of no difference. Even if there are differences, one must ask, so what? What are the policy implications of those differences? Will we only hire female principals? Male principals?

Eichler (1980) describes how we can use sex as a variable in research:

> We must perceive all analyses concerning sex as a two-stage process. As a first step, it is necessary to chart the presence of sex differences and similarities in all kinds of situations. Thus, in a descriptive manner, sex can and must be used as an explanatory variable. For instance, sex 'explains' a lot of the difference in terms of salary levels between employees in similar occupations. The explanation provided by this type of statement is of a probabilistic kind only. However, we must never use sex as a variable in a causal sense in order to explain social facts. That is, we must not accept an equation of a description of sex differences with their explanation. For instance, we may empirically observe that women who are offered executive chances for promotion are more reluctant to accept them than men. If so, the likelihood of accepting offered promotions would be an observed sex difference. Sex has been used as an explanatory variable in a probabilistic sense. However, this observation tells us nothing about the reasons why women are less likely to accept offered promotions. A possible explanation might be that as women move into higher positions, they encounter fewer and fewer other women and increased male solidarity and hostility against themselves, which makes such positions very lonely to hold. The explanation for not accepting a certain type of social position would, in such a case, be lack of social support for the potential incumbent of the position, a reason which would, under different circumstances, be equally applicable to men. In social policy terms, a move to counteract this effect might involve promotion of a whole group of women together to a higher level. An observed sex difference has, therefore, been explained by a non-sexual, non-biological, social factor. If we fail to take that second step and do not deal with sex in a dialectical manner, we

> fail to explain anything at all and, worse than that, we may create new sexual stereotypes ourselves. A feminist programme of research must, therefore, include both the charting and description of sex differences and similarities, and an attempt to explain the observed sex differences in a non-sexual manner. (pp. 122-123, italics mine)

Beyond the fact that the male model is the norm and that the dissertations perpetuate sexism, women are not investigated as populations but as topics of study, much as someone would research whales or hurricanes. For instance, the reviews of the literature within the dissertations tend to cover any piece of literature which relates to women, whether or not it is pertinent to the subject being investigated. One review of the literature, for example, is more than 900 pages in length and covers topics as far afield as the history of the women's movement in England and early feminist literature. This practice illustrates both the confusion on the subject of women and reinforces the idea that men are a population and women a deviant subject matter.

Methods

The data collection device most used in these dissertations is the mail survey. This finding is consistent with methodologies used generally in educational administration dissertations:

> Questionnaires are the most common data gathering procedure in graduate research on educational administration...A few years ago, one study concluded that perhaps 80 percent of all educational administration dissertations completed during the period 1960-1966 relied on this technique.
>
> (Haller, 1979, p. 48)

Many researchers have pointed out the inadequacy of this paradigm for generating useful information on women. Others, such as Greenfeld (1981) have critiqued the method as unable to provide an understanding of the educational process at all.

Inherent in this paradigm are the instruments used--instruments which

are not only sexist but which help to perpetuate a sexist world. For instance, the BEM scale, which should have been rendered sterile by the critique of Pedhazur and Tentenbaum (1979),helps to reinforce sex roles.

Eichler (1980) illustrates this aspect of this instrument and others like it:

> For as long as people identify masculinity - femininity scales as adequate reflections of reality, being analytical, independent, individualistic, self-reliant, and self-sufficient will not be seen as human attributes, but as specifically masculine attributes, even if a majority of women were suddenly found to possess these traits.
>
> (p.68)

The LBDQ, the OCDQ, and other common data collection devices are male oriented and leave out important dimensions of the female experience (Hanson and Shakeshaft, Note 3). These instruments need to be discarded in research on women since they add little to our knowledge and reinforce a unidimensional worldview.

Slocum (1975) puts more succinctly the problems of bias in these dissertations. "We are human beings studying other human beings, and we cannot leave ourselves out of the equation. We choose to ask certain questions and not others." (p. 37) In these dissertations, the questions asked are primarily male questions.

It is important to stress, at this point, that these studies have not been useless exercises in degree-getting. Researchers have gathered information on the woman administrator which has previously been absent from research on administration. Research of this type has usually focused on the male administrator and has not looked at the female at all. For this reason, these studies are important; they have brought the woman administrator into the mainstream of educational research. But where do we go from here?

Paradigm for Future Research

The research on the woman administrator, up to this point, has come

primarily from the male model. The next step would seem to be to move in the direction of a female-defined research paradigm. In order to move beyond the present state of research the following findings from the analysis of the dissertation research may be used as a basis for the conceptualization of a new paradigm:

- Women do most of the research on women in academic administration.
- Feminists produce higher quality studies than do non-feminists.
- The survey method has been the overwhelming approach to research on women in administration and does not yield high quality results.
- Qualitative or historical techniques are representative of high quality studies on women in educational administration.
- The majority of the studies do not contribute to the substance of the literature on women in academic administration.
- Much of the research on women in academic administration is sexist.

Given this information, a paradigm for research on women in educational administration can be postulated.

The first tenet of this paradigm includes an expansion of the naturalistic method of inquiry. The analysis of the dissertation literature supports the notion that naturalistic methods, at this stage of inquiry, might be more productive than traditionalscientistic methods. Not only are observational techniques more highly correlated with quality research, but also much of the research from a quantitative perspective analyzed in this study fails to add anything meaningful to the literature on women in academic administration. Naturalistic research methods may be characterized by sustained contact between the researcher and the subjects, they are built on direct experience, and they produce data that is descriptive of events, people, places, and conversations (Biklin, Note 4).

The emphasis on field study brings out a second aspect of the approach to the study of women in educational administration: hypothesis generation rather than hypothesis testing. At this time, descriptive data are needed about women in positions of power, in positions of isolation. Insufficient information is available from which to formulate, not to mention test, theories. At this point, researchers need to collect information so that theories can be developed to explain the slice of life called women in educational administration.

A further dimension of this paradigm is that the research must grow out of personal experiences, feelings and needs of the researcher. It explores a world in order to understand and to legitimate it as seen from the eyes of women. It is a way of seeing the world without holding it against another yardstick, the "measure of man". Eichler's (1980) definition of feminist research conceptualizes adequately what is implied and what will be referred to as the feminist perspective of the paradigm:

> Feminist science, then, is presently concerned with two tasks: first, to point out the various ways in which currently accepted scientific methods and theories are, in fact, sexist and thereby distorting, and second, to try to devise new methods and theories which will not have the weaknesses that non-feminist science has. (p. 119)

The present study indicates that it is the feminist who undertakes the highest quality research, and thus, a feminist perspective is an essential component in this paradigm for research on women in educational administration.

A fourth component of this paradigm is borrowed from a concept by Anton Note 1.): authority for truth needs to be reinvested in the subject. Conclusions from work on women in educational administration need to be taken back to the subjects to see if they ring true. By reinvesting the authority of knowledge back in the subject, it is more likely that the research effort will reflect a female consciousness and a female experience. Additionally,

it changes research from a passive undertaking, from the point of view of the subject, to an active one. It then becomes an interactionist method for discovering "truth". This incorporation of the participant's interpretations and the collaboration between researcher and participant is an essential element in the research paradigm.

An additional feature of this paradigm is a reliance on the oral tradition, rather than the written one, both in gathering the data and in reporting the results. An oral tradition is more flexible and allows for the sharing of information and the refining of conclusions before the "truth" is engraved forever on the tablet. An oral tradition moves from the concept of expert to that of sharer of information. It is dynamic rather than static. Applebee (1978) has stressed the importance of the story as an organizing device. Let us begin to use the story as a data collection technique and a way to view structure.

The sixth element in this paradigm for research on women in educational administration is the use of research as an instrument for social change. It is clear that in many of the dissertations, the purpose of the research was to effect change. Under this paradigm, that purpose is recognized and named.

Given this paradigm, what might be the direction of research on women in educational administration? This paradigm has implications for the categories of research that have already been undertaken, in addition to new directions in which research is to be done. The following discussion analyzes the research categories in light of this paradigm.

Status The number of women administrators at all levels needs to be recorded systematically. This is essential information for practical and political purposes. Although not the proper domain of the dissertation, this information is helpful data for policy making decisions which would help women to enter educational administration.

Profiles Studies which profile the woman administrator, while of passing interest, do not help to build theory nor do they lend insights into ways in which women can be integrated into the management of schools. Profiles, as they have been done in the dissertations analyzed, are unnecessary bits of information within the context of the paradigm.

Barriers From a feminist perspective, the question here might change from "What keeps women out of a man's world?" to "What changes can be made in the male world to facilitate women?" Taking the existing system and alternating it is one feminist solution. From this viewpoint, the study of aspiration level, for instance, changes focus. No longer is it asked, "Why aren't women teachers aspiring to be administrators?" but instead, "How can the system be changed so that women, who entered teaching with the goal of teaching and not administering, might have some function in the decision-making processes of the schools?" The male hierarchy, with its administrative specialization, is not the only model that will work. It is, however, the only model that has been tried on large scale populations. Looking at other models of organization which have been tried in feminist enterprises - flattened hierarchies, cooperatives - might give clues to ways that schools can be managed that would be more compatible with women's interest in teaching. Rather than looking at ways in which women can charge their aspiration level to suit the organization, research under this paradigm would look at ways in which the organization can change itself to fit the aspirations of women.

Organizational changes are not the only solutions under this paradigm. Strategies for change need to be evaluated at all levels, whether individual or organizational. Strategies which challenge barriers need to be tested and evaluated. For instance, one solution that feminists have offered for change are organizations which bring together institutions seeking women candidates for posts and women candidates qualified for such posts. The organizations

provide training programs for women in educational administration. These programs need to be evaluated for their effectiveness and to be assessed on the basis of the kinds of changes that are occurring. Are they producing imitation men? Or are they giving women the skills to enter administration but also ways in which to introduce feminine values into traditionally male organizations?

Much of the research done thus far has looked for single barriers to women: one reason why women are not in administration. Oftentimes, one reason that has been given is the woman herself. This blaming the victim mentality is not productive in dealing with the issues of barriers to the woman administrator. Causation is multi-faceted, rather than singular, and blaming the victim does not provide strategies for entering the field of administration. Additionally, such routes to political and educational leadership such as the PTA, need to be explored in relationship to women.

Attitudes By asking people how they feel about women administrators, one is condoning the acceptance of negative attitudes. One is, in effect, saying that it is not only acceptable but also worthy of a major research effort to ask if women are capable of being school administrators. By dichotomizing the choice in attitudinal surveys, researchers are perpetuating the myth that women might not be acceptable administrators. Attitudinal surveys, as they have been done in the dissertations, then, are based upon a sexist foundation. The only worthwhile information that attitudinal surveys can gather has been gathered. We now know that sexist and negative attitudes are held toward women administrators by some teachers, administrators, school board members, and the public. We also know that these negative attitudes aren't as widespread as we would be led to believe by those who would rather women remained out of school administration. Under this paradigm, attitudinal surveys would only be appropriate if they were also linked with interventionist techniques to change attitudes. This approach moves us from repetitive

documentation to change strategy.

Leadership Styles/Effectiveness The majority of the studies on leadership styles and effectiveness have been done for the purposes of seeing if women "measure up" to men. Not much is known about women's leadership styles, how they treat subordinates, and what effects women's supervisory styles have on school processes, on violence in schools, and on learning. If studies are to be done on this topic, they need to be done without the specter of "measuring up". Women need to be studied for ways in which they solve problems which might be particular to women and from which men can learn. New questions need to be asked. Because of their supposed and sometimes real lack of physical prowess, do women have ways of diffusing violence that might be used by all school administrators? Given their preference for teaching, do women administer in ways which encourage learning?

The woman administrator is still a mystery. Very little is known about how she deals with everyday situations. Observing women administrators at work might give some insight into ways in which they manage and, hopefully, will produce practical data from which theories of administration can be built.

Structural Effects Women's relationships to organizational structure are still unknown. Questions of how women administer under certain organizational structures, how women function in various organizational modes, and the relationship of the organization to the position women hold all need answering. The effects of unconscious male power and sex as a status characteristic still need organizational investigation.

Theory Literature The theory upon which much of administration is based comes from management and is the theory of men, not of women. This theory literature needs to be reread within the feminist context and challenged based upon the ways in which women behave. Is it still valid?

Do women see people in terms of Theory X and Theory Y? Where do women fit on the managerial grid, if at all? The bulk of the theory taught in administrative courses in education has no room for women and needs to be rethought, questioned, challenged, and, ultimately, rewritten.

Communications Women's methods of communication can tell much about the ways in which they administer. Do they communicate directly or through memorandums? Do women communicate with all levels of the hierarchy or just with their immediate subordinates and superordinates? Questions of communication patterns might give insights into ways in which women manage.

These are some examples of ways the proposed paradigm for research on women in educational administration might be incorporated into topic areas already begun to be explored in the literature. But this is only a beginning. Working from this paradigm will hopefully bring new ways of looking at all questions, as the researcher moves into women's experience. The next step might be studies of women's leadership styles in female defined organizations, followed by studies of feminist organizations or feminist solutions to organizational structure. The possibilities are boundless once the leap has been made from the male defined perspective to the female defined perspective. It is time to take that leap.

Research Notes

1. Anton, J. The feminine perspective in educational research. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association/SIG: Research on Women and Education. Cleveland, Ohio, November 3, 1979.

2. Schaef, A. W. Tape recording of talk at Yale Divinity School. Date unknown.

3. Hanson, M. and Shakeshaft, C. Sexist bias in educational administration research: Problems and issues. Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Los Angeles: April, 1981.

4. Biklin, S. Qualitative research and the study of social change in education. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, MA, April 11, 1980.

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